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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5122
INFO RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ALMATY PRIORITY 9700
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY 1453
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 3875
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0878
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 1013
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1766
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 6506
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7374
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4660
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9715
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 1019
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY 2161
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0967
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 3559
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 0624
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 8832
RHWSMRC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1479
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

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SUBJECT: BOMBINGS AND SUICIDE ATTACKS: A PLAGUE ON BOTH
SIDES OF THE BORDER

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) A November 17 suicide bomb attack on a police van in Peshawar that killed the bomber and seriously injured two police officers is another reminder that the recent spike in suicide bombings in Afghanistan is now mirrored on this side of the Pak-Afghan border. The November 8 suicide bomb attack on Dargai Fort in Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) that killed 42 army recruits was the deadliest attack in Pakistan to date. A week earlier, on November 1, a car bomb in Quetta killed three people and injured seven; this was also an apparent suicide attack, although local police have since said the driver may not have been aware he was carrying a bomb. In addition, three timed bombs exploded in Peshawar in October, one of which killed six people in a food market. A bomb hidden in a rubbish bin in Lahore exploded November 17, killing three people.

GOP Recognizes the Problem

12. (C) On November 16, journalists from Pakistani and American news outlets told Poloffs that, in background briefings after the October 30 missile attack on an extremist madrassa in Bajaur, GOP officials indicated that militants at the madrassa had been training as suicide bombers and were preparing for imminent attacks. These reporters, all of whom challenged the GOP claim that its forces conducted the air strike, said they had no reason to disbelieve the government's assertion that the Bajaur madrassa was being used to train suicide bombers. In fact, they expressed concern that such training was spreading in the tribal areas. Contacts in both NWFP and Islamabad note that the November 8 suicide attack on Dargai Fort has led many who had initially accepted news reports that young schoolchildren had been killed in the Bajaur air strike to reconsider the GOP claims

that the Bajaur facility was actually a militant training site. Dramatically increased police protection at airports and in parts of Islamabad since Dargai, and rumors in local newspapers of other suicide bombers ready to strike, indicate that both the government and the population are aware of the increasing threat from such attacks.

Comment

13. (C) For all the talk of the training of suicide bombers, two of Pakistan's three suicide attacks in November seem to have been bungled, with the bomber (or unwitting proxy) failing to arrive at a densely populated area prior to the explosion. Nevertheless, the Dargai attack showed that suicide bombers do not need to be smart or lucky every time. After the heavy loss of life in the Dargai attack, facile claims that the GOP is supporting or tolerating militant groups that recruit and train suicide bombers are losing credibility. Pakistanis -- particularly the Army, security forces and police -- are paying a heavy price in these attacks.
CROCKER